

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Original) A pay-out tube adapted to be operatively associated with a cable container through which cable from a winding disposed within the container is fed, comprising: a generally elliptically-shaped tube having a major axis, a minor axis, an outlet end portion, and an inlet end portion; a series of spaced-apart reinforcing ribs integrally formed in the inlet end portion of the tube and generally aligned with the major and minor axes of the tube; and wherein each rib assumes a longitudinal configuration and projects towards the outlet end portion of the tube, and includes a generally arcuate-shaped outer surface.

2. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 wherein the tube includes an inlet end and wherein each reinforcing rib includes a width that becomes progressively wider towards the inlet end of the tube.

3. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 wherein the tube includes an inlet end and wherein each rib includes first and second ends, the first end disposed adjacent the inlet end of the tube and the second end disposed adjacent an intermediate area of the tube, and wherein the thickness of the rib increases from the second end to the first end.

4. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 wherein the tube includes inner and outer surfaces and wherein the reinforcing ribs rise outwardly from the outer surface of the tube.

5. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 wherein the tube includes an inlet end and wherein each of the reinforcing ribs terminate short of the inlet end.

6. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 wherein the tube includes a wall structure and an inlet end, wherein each reinforcing rib includes a pair of opposed ends, one end being disposed adjacent the inlet end of the tube and the other end being disposed adjacent an intermediate

area of the tube, and wherein the end of the reinforcing rib disposed adjacent the intermediate area of the tube blends into the wall of the tube.

7. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 1 including an outer locking plate adapted to be secured to the tube and about the outside of the cable container, and a cable retainer associated with the locking plate, the cable retainer including a slitted surface that defines at least two flexible sections and wherein an end portion of a cable can be inserted into the slitted surface and retained thereby.

8. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 7 wherein the cable retainer comprises a membrane having the series of sections formed by at least two slits.

9. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 8 wherein the membrane is confined within a generally circular area and includes at least four sections separated in part, at least by two criss-crossing slits.

10. (Original) A pay-out tube for use with a cable container and through which cable from a winding disposed within the container is fed, comprising:

- a. a tube adapted to at least partially extend into the interior of the cable container for permitting cable disposed within the container to be fed through the tube and out of the container;
- b. a fastener for securing the tube to the cable container, the fastener being adapted to be secured to the tube such that at least a portion thereof lies exterior of the cable container; and
- c. a cable retainer adapted to be disposed exteriorly of the cable container for receiving an end portion of the cable housed within the cable container

and retaining the same, the cable retainer including a surface divided by one or more slits that form at least two sections with at least one of the two sections being deflectable and which deflect at least partially open in response to the end of the cable being inserted between the sections.

11. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 10 wherein the slitted surface forms a membrane having a series of deflectable sections.

12. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 11 wherein the membrane includes at least four deflectable sections formed by cross-slits.

13. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 12 wherein the membrane is surrounded by a perimeter material more rigid than the material forming the sections of the membrane.

14. Canceled.

15. Canceled.

16. Canceled.

17. (Currently Amended) A pay-out tube for use with a cable container and through which cable from a winding disposed within the container is fed, comprising: a molded tube portion for receiving and guiding cable from the interior of the cable container to the exterior of the cable container, wherein the tube portion assumes a generally elliptical configuration having major and minor axes; and the tube portion including a surrounding wall having a thickness and a series of spaced-apart, nonintersecting ribs integrally molded into the wall and extending from the wall such that a thickness of the individual ribs exceeds the thickness of the wall; and wherein there is provided at least four ribs with the individual ribs being aligned with the major and minor axes of the tube.

18. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 17 wherein the ribs are longitudinally disposed on the wall of the tube

19. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 17 wherein the wall of the tube includes inner and outer surfaces and wherein the individual ribs extend outwardly from the outer surface of the wall.

20. Canceled.

21. (Original) The pay-out tube of claim 17 wherein each rib includes opposed ends wherein the thickness of the ribs vary from one end to the other.

22. (Previously Presented) A pay-out tube and cable retainer for use with a cable container adapted to house a cable winding, comprising: a pay-out tube adapted to receive cable from the winding and guide the cable from an area interior of the cable container to an area exterior of the cable container; a cable retainer associated with the pay-out tube for receiving and retaining an end portion of a cable exteriorly of the cable container; and the cable retainer including a surface having at least one slit formed therein that defines two sections, at least one section being deflectable and which opens in response to the cable being inserted between the two sections permitting the cable to be moved between the two sections and be held by the two sections.

23. (Previously Presented) The pay-out tube and cable retainer of claim 22 wherein the cable retainer includes a membrane having at least four deflectable sections formed by a pair of cross-slits.

24. (Previously Presented) The pay-out tube and cable retainer of claim 23 wherein the membrane is formed interiorly of a perimeter and wherein the material comprising the four sections of the cable retainer are less rigid than material lying outwardly of the

perimeter.